



Connecting Older Adults with Community-based Resources and Options

AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging for the suburban Chicago region since 1974, supports the goals set forth in the National Alzheimer's Plan. The Aging Network plays a strong role in supporting older adults with Alzheimer's and their families and we appreciate our inclusion in many areas of the Plan, including strengthening the state aging workforce and providing education, training and support.

In order to make the National Plan inclusive and responsive to the needs of individuals with Alzheimer's disease and their families, we recommend that the Advisory Council include the following in the Plan:

- Stronger emphasis on caregiver support services. It is crucial that caregivers are supported in order to ensure that they are able to provide high quality of care and that people with Alzheimer's disease are able to stay in their homes as long as possible. Local Area Agencies on Aging have been providing caregiver support services since 2001 through funding provided by the Older Americans Act. These services include support groups, caregiver counseling, caregiver training programs and respite care options. While these programs are utilized by all caregivers, many clients care for loved ones with Alzheimer's disease. Additionally, Area Agencies on Aging provide outreach and education to caregivers and information and referral services to connect caregivers with appropriate resources.
- Collaboration at the local level. The National Alzheimer's Plan focuses primarily on national and state organizations. It is essential to include local Area Agencies on Aging, providers, the faith based community and stakeholders in the discussions and plans. Local organizations in our area provide programming and services for people with Alzheimer's and their families, including evidence based programs, case management, support groups, respite care and information and referral. These local organizations must be included in the Plan in order to ensure that individuals in need of Alzheimer's support services have full access to the benefits that will result from this national initiative.

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